

TRIBUTE TO MARY EVA GOMEZ

HON. ESTEBAN EDWARD TORRES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 1996

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mary Eva Gomez, a special woman who has spent much of her life working for the betterment of her community.

Mary Eva was born to Juan and Laura Gutierrez on February 28, 1931, in Hanover, NM. Her early education was spent in the Grant County schools until she moved on to St. Mary's Academy, where she graduated from high school. While in New Mexico, Mary Eva began her community involvement. She became an accomplished violinist, which earned her a seat with the Grant County Symphony in 1951 and 1952. She also served as organist and choir master for Holy Family Catholic Church in Hanover.

Mary Eva and her husband Ramon, whom she married in 1949, moved to California in 1957, settling in Pico Rivera in 1964. She and her husband have 6 children and 11 grandchildren.

Mary Eva has served as a strong advocate for the children of the El Rancho Unified School District. From 1964 to the present, she has taken an interest in the education that the children of Pico Rivera receive. From attending countless Parent Teacher Association meetings to serving as a distinguished member of the district board of education, Mary Eva has demonstrated her genuine concern for the children of the community.

Mary Eva has served her community in many other ways. She is an active member in the Pio Pico Women's Club, a member of Auxiliary V.F.W. Post 7734, and an educator and minister at St. Hilary's Catholic Church for which she raised \$1,500 for its food for the homeless project. This is only a fraction of her community involvement.

Although her accomplishments are many, her work on the El Rancho Unified School District Board of Education from 1981 through 1995 is what most deserves notice, and commendation. Her presence will be sorely missed but her deeds will be dearly remembered.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and honor that I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Mary Eva Gomez, a special friend, energetic public servant and community leader, an individual who has given so generously to so many.

THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 1996

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, February 14, 1996, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL

With my support, Congress this month enacted into law a sweeping telecommunications reform bill, the most far-reaching measure passed by this Congress. It affects services that virtually every American uses and which generate hundreds of billions of

dollars annually. The bill, which President Clinton has signed into law, is the culmination of several years of efforts to reform the nation's telecommunication laws, which were last comprehensively rewritten in 1934. There has long been broad consensus that those laws were outdated, failing to take into account rapidly advancing technology, but often vast disagreement about how best to change them.

WHAT DOES THE LAW DO?

Many telecommunications services are currently provided by highly regulated monopolies. Often, competition has been expressly prohibited: for example, local phone companies cannot provide cable TV, and vice versa. The purpose of the new law is to create one giant marketplace for telecommunications services. It aims to end monopolies, allowing largely deregulated competition. The goal is to expand consumers' choices while lowering their costs, spurring innovation along the way.

Phone service: The breakup of the Bell system in 1984 generally prohibited one company from offering both local and long-distance service to the same customers. The new law eliminates those barriers, requiring local phone companies to open up their networks to competitors, including long-distance companies. Once there is competition, local phone companies could offer long-distance services to their subscribers. In addition, public utilities, like electric companies, will now be permitted to provide telecommunications services through a separate subsidiary.

The bill contains protections for rural communities, which may see less competition because of the high cost of providing service to these areas. The law allows the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and states to order carriers to provide quality phone service at reasonable rates in rural areas, and exempts small phone companies from some requirements if they prove economically burdensome. In addition, the bill prohibits "slamming"—the practice of duping customers into unwittingly switching their long-distance carrier.

Television: The new law permits phone companies to offer cable service and allows television networks to own cable systems. It also deregulates cable television rates over the next three years, except for basic service. Some current restrictions on the number of radio and television stations that one company may own are relaxed.

Congress deferred final action on the contentious issue of advanced television services, such as high-definition TV. Broadcasters argue that they need additional broadcast spectrum in order to make the transition to high-definition TV, while phone companies and cable operators argue that broadcasters should have to pay for any additional spectrum.

V-chip: The law requires all newly manufactured TVs with 13-inch or larger screens to include a "v-chip." Broadcasters have one year to voluntarily establish rules for rating video programming that contains sexual, violent, or indecent material and to transmit such ratings during broadcasts. The v-chip would then enable parents to block objectionable programming from their TV sets.

Computing: The new law bars the transmission of obscene materials to minors over a computer network. Violators could be punished with up to two years in jail and fines as high as \$250,000 for an individual and \$500,000 for a company. The law protects providers of on-line service, like America Online, from prosecution if their systems are merely the means by which someone transmits the indecent material. The law also endorses efforts by software companies to de-

sign programs that parents and others can use to block objectionable material.

OUTLOOK

The new law is a watershed in U.S. telecommunications policy. The transition from highly controlled monopolies to competition is likely to be bumpy at times, and the effects will not be the same for all consumers. Some companies are better positioned to take advantage of the new opportunities, and some industries and regions of the country are likely to see fiercer competition than others. In the short term we may see more joint ventures and mergers, as companies that were previously barred from entering each other's business are now able to cooperate. The end result may be a handful of industry giants, each of which offers the customer a wide range of information and entertainment services.

The new laws breaks down barriers that have existed for decades and sets off a competitive free-for-all. Consumers who find themselves annoyed by frequent solicitations to change their long-distance carriers are in for more of the same, as expanded choices become available in cable and local phone service. But greater competition is likely to drive prices down over time, and companies will have to innovate in order to compete.

The law, of course, does not please everyone. Many computer users and advocates of free speech protest that it places unconstitutional restrictions on speech. Consumer groups warn that cable and telephone services could be more expensive.

The challenge Congress faced in writing this law was to establish a level playing field for all providers of telecommunication services, ensuring that no one provider would become so dominant as to establish a new, and unregulated, monopoly. I am optimistic that the new law will do that, but I also agree with those who say that none of us can predict precisely how it will play out. While the bill goes far to break down barriers to competition, and junks volumes of regulations, the final product leaves many issues to the FCC. My strong suspicion is that the bill does not deregulate the industry as much as some proponents claim. I believe that Congress must keep a close watch to ensure that the promise of the new law is realized, and be prepared to take action if consumers are adversely affected.

In the end, this bill was finally pushed forward because the congressional leadership desperately wanted a major legislative achievement to point to. And it was accomplished through a genuinely bipartisan effort, involving congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle and the Clinton Administration. The lesson we should learn is that fostering consensus across party lines is the way to get things done. I hope that we see more of that in the days ahead.

HONORING AFRICAN-AMERICANS

HON. OWEN B. PICKETT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 1996

Mr. PICKETT. Mr. Speaker, as we again celebrate Black History Month, it is important to take note of the profound influence that African-Americans have had on American history and American society.

From the early days of our Republic when much of our country's economy rested on the backs of slave labor, to the complex commercialism of modern America the thread of black history has steadily grown and expanded.